

Minutes of the Strategic Board Meeting: 13th October 2023

Attendees:

Sarah Dance	Chair
Simon Cook	Deputy Chair
Helen Russell	CEO
Carol Ford	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
Cllr Christine Bayliss	District/Borough/City Councils representative
Liz Gibney	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Kevin Bentley	Essex County Council
Cllr John Lamb	Southend-on-Sea City Council
Cllr Lauren Edwards	Medway Council
Cllr Clair Bell	Kent County Council
Gregory Wilkinson	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
David Sheppard	Team East Sussex
Clive Soper	Team East Sussex
Prof. Karen Cox	Higher Education Representative
Lara Fox	Success Essex
Penny Shimmin	Social Enterprise Representative
Perry Glading	Opportunity South Essex
Mark Curle	Opportunity South Essex
Vince Lucas	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
Ana Christie	Team East Sussex
Andrew Metcalf	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
David Milham	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership

Other Attendees:

Michael Neumann	Essex County Council (s151)	Jo Simmons	SELEP Secretariat
Zoe Gordon	SELEP Secretariat	Line Bannister	Essex Legal Services
Vivien Prigg	SELEP Secretariat	Lorna Norris	Essex County Council
Dave Evans	East Sussex County Council	Louise Aitken	SELEP Secretariat
Helen Dyer	SELEP Secretariat	Tim Rignall	Southend City Council
Brian Horton	SELEP Secretariat	Paul Chapman	Essex County Council
Howard Davies	SELEP Secretariat	Tristan Smith	Essex County Council
Sunny Ee	Medway Council	David Smith	Kent County Council
Jessica Jagpal	Medway Council	Sharon Spicer	SELEP Secretariat
Ian Lewis	OSE	Steve Samson	Kent County Council
Richard Dawson	East Sussex County Council	Gary Crooks	Thurrock Council
Alex Riley	SELEP Secretariat	Kate Kozlova-Boran	Thurrock Council
Keri Lawrence	SELEP Secretariat		

This meeting was held as a virtual meeting and a recording can be found by clicking [here](#); the timestamp of the start of the discussion for each item is indicated in brackets.

Item 1: Welcome and introductions

Apologies: Cllr Roger Gough (Kent County Council) – substituted by Cllr Clair Bell – Cabinet Member for Communities, Cllr Tony Cox (Southend-on -Sea City Council) – substituted by Cllr John Lamb, Jo James (Kent and Medway Economic Partnership) – substituted by Andrew Metcalf.

Item 2: Minutes of last meeting, declarations of interest, matters arising (02'26" timestamp on video)

- 2.1. The Board agreed the minutes of the July meeting as an accurate record.
- 2.2. No interests were declared.
- 2.3. Sarah Dance reminded Directors that they need to keep their Register of Interests form up to date which is published and available to view on the SELEP website.
- 2.4. No Public Questions have been received.
- 2.5. Sarah Dance asked the Board to note that Matthew Arnold is stepping down as a Director of the SELEP due to new commitments. Matthew is unable to join this meeting, but Sarah wished to thank him for all his work on the Board and his dedication to the LEP, and is pleased that he will continue to be involved in KMEP and feed into the work of SELEP from a Federated Board perspective. David Milham from the Federation of Small Business has been nominated by KMEP to replace Matthew as the new business representative and will be observing the Board meeting today. Decisions about new members of the SELEP Board will be made at the December Strategic Board meeting.
- 2.6. Michael Neumann provided an update on behalf of the Accountable Body on the outcome of the Audit. The Accountable Body had intended to bring the 2022/23 Accounts for review at this meeting, however unfortunately the Audit itself was not completed in time. The outcome of the Audit has now been received and there are no concerns to raise to the SELEP Board. The Accountable Body intends to bring the 2022/23 Accounts to the Strategic Board for consideration in December when the Board will be afforded the opportunity to ask any questions. The Accountable Body continues to provide regular updates via the Accountability Board, the last of which was at the September meeting. Sarah thanked Michael for the update and Essex County Council for the ongoing support provided as Accountable Body.

Item 3: Draft SELEP Integration Plan and Local Authority's update (05'23" timestamp on video)

- 3.1. Helen Russell presented to the Board.
- 3.2. Helen Russell took the opportunity to thank the SELEP Secretariat team who have worked hard in recent weeks to put together the plan over and above business as usual, as well as thanking the Local Authority officers who have actively engaged in a positive and pragmatic way which has enabled the plan to be produced in the short space of time available.
- 3.3. Sarah Dance reiterated her gratitude for the work of the Secretariat team and Local Authority officers and noted the huge amount of work in a very short amount of time. She stressed the importance of not only upholding the values and principles that underpin the work of SELEP, but that there is an orderly handover in which the legacy and learning of the LEP is not lost.
- 3.4. Gregory Wilkinson (DLUHC) was asked to provide an update from the Government's point of view, particularly given the number of areas where clarification is sought by SELEP to ensure an orderly and timely integration of LEP functions. Gregory thanked the LEP and Local Authorities, the collaborative spirit of the work undertaken thus far has been appreciated by the department and the quick progress has been noted. It has been helpful to receive the responses by the LEP and Local Authorities to the Government Guidance. Further guidance is expected by January 2024. In the interim, DLUHC are working through issues one by one that have been raised and appreciate everyone's patience, the department is looking at a large Geography and lots of different types

of LEP formations and each is individual and complex. One point of clarification available is with respect to at what point the National Growth Assurance Framework is phased out and English devolution framework becomes applicable. DLUHC is working on a new National Assurance Framework for areas not in negotiation of a devolution settlement or not in process of a devolution deal and therefore not subject to the English Devolution Framework. This revised Framework will be in place for Local Authorities post integration. Further clarity will be provided once the revised Framework has gone through central clearance processes. Helen and Gregory have weekly meetings and Board members are asked to feed in any queries they may have to the department. Sarah Dance stressed the importance of government guidance for LEPs as well as for the Local Authorities and thanked Gregory for the update.

- 3.5. The Local Authority's provided updates on the integration from their perspective to the Board (27'18" timestamp on video):
- 3.6. Cllr Kevin Bentley (Essex County Council) acknowledged the amount of work that is being done to achieve LEP integration and thanked Helen Russell for leading the team. Essex County Council are working to a Level 2 Devolution, having been given the go ahead 4 and a half weeks ago, and work is progressing rapidly with the other Upper Tier Local Authorities Southend and Thurrock but also all the Districts and Police fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC). He stated that Essex County Council are working strongly with businesses which has now come together under the Greater Essex Business Board. The new board will also include larger strategic businesses as well as involving the Chambers and SMEs so that there is a mix of businesses around the table including some of the bigger logistical businesses such as the airports and the freeports and other ports in the Greater Essex area. Everyone has been fully briefed and kept on board and had their say. Essex County Council are meeting today with the Upper Tier Local Authorities and the PFCC to discuss governance arrangements which is crucial in order to get the final green light on the devolution deal from government. The LEP competencies will be transferred to the combined authority and the Districts will continue to be part of that and will have a seat at the table along with the PFCC. Cllr Bentley stressed that he has never known greater collaboration across Essex and between all the Local Authorities which is to be welcomed. Cllr Bentley emphasised that we are all here to serve the public for no other reason, and there is a strong sense of that happening in Greater Essex. Everything outlined in Helen's presentation with respect to governance and transfer of LEP competencies are all in place and if government agrees, Essex are hoping for an announcement in the Autumn Statement in November that it is a place of devolution.
- 3.7. Cllr Clair Bell outlined that Kent County Council are preparing for integration based on the information in the August Government Guidance with respect to Functional Economic Areas and as such are working on the basis of a Kent and Medway geography. Officers have been fully integrated into the five workstreams coordinated by SELEP and the Economy team is leading on the work supported by the Finance, Legal and HR teams. The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee was supportive of Kent taking on LEP responsibilities next year, a formal decision will be taken next week by the Cabinet member for economic development Derek Murphy. A Kent and Medway Integration Plan has been drafted which has been discussed with Medway Council, and shared with KMEP last week who were supportive of the direction of travel. Kent County Council are clear on the main issues, such as becoming the Accountable Body for the Capital Programmes, ensuring that businesses are fully engaged in the transition process and future plans, the continuation of the Kent and Medway Growth Hub and finalising their Local Economic Strategy to underpin future work. Kent County Council are now working through details such as staffing and resourcing requirements, KMEP's role and structure going forward and considering the practical arrangements necessary to be ready for the formal handover of the LEP responsibilities next year.
- 3.8. Cllr Lauren Edwards (Medway Council), wished to echo the positive comments, officers have fed back that the integration workstreams have been working well. Medway Council Leader Cllr Vince Maple has been clear that although Medway Council want the extra powers and extra funding, it is not interested in the current devolution options being proposed by government and prefer to wait for the more bespoke devolution deal that may be on offer in the future. Very productive discussions have been had with Kent County Council on

integration as outlined by Cllr Clair Bell, particularly with regard to working together on the continuation of the Growth Hubs in Kent and Medway and continuing to have KMEP as the voice for business in the region, with whom Medway is working very closely and developing the economic picture for the region. In terms of future governance, Medway Council want to become their own Accountable Body for ongoing Local Growth Fund projects, the rationale is that they already report directly to government on other schemes and wish to continue to do that without adding another extra layer of reporting and similarly Medway Council want to take on responsibility for GBF projects as well. Medway Council are also very interested in having as much flexibility as an Upper Tier Local Authority as possible with respect to how funds are spent, for instance having the flexibility around capital or revenue expenditure in order to deliver the growth that is needed. It would be appropriate therefore for Medway Council as their own Accountable Body to make their own decisions and report to government directly, and in terms of governance Medway are intending to take a paper to Cabinet to delegate authority to be able to make the necessary decisions at pace to meet the March 2024 deadline.

- 3.9. Cllr Keith Glazier (East Sussex County Council) outlined that East Sussex has made resources available across all the departments including Finance, HR and Legal teams to ensure full engagement in each of the SELEP integration workstreams. They have also engaged with Team East Sussex (TES) to provide updates ensuring that businesses, boroughs and district colleagues are all kept in the loop. A clear timeline has been set out for the local approvals process ensuring that both the draft and the final versions of the SELEP Integration Plan receive the approval of the Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Full Council, the last of these is scheduled to take place in February 2024, so will be fully concluded ahead of the March SELEP Strategic Board meeting. The schedules include TES engagement throughout. East Sussex officers are now working on an East Sussex Integration Plan arranging for the activities of the SELEP plan into the County specific actions, and the first draft will be ready at the end of this month. In terms of risks identified, in relation to the Growth Hub, East Sussex have already moved the service in-house so have already mitigated the risks in the gap of business support services. Government guidance is clear that they encourage Upper Tier Local Authorities to create or continue to engage with the Economic Growth Board made up of business leaders and relevant representative bodies in order to provide the view of local businesses as part of the regional decision making and to work with local leaders to create the broad economic strategy for the area. Before the transition work even began East Sussex agreed that Team East Sussex would continue to operate beyond the life of SELEP as the Strategic Economic Growth Board for the County and work is already being done together on an Economic Growth Strategy for 2024. Cllr Glazier was pleased that the DLUHC lead attended the TES board meeting and she commented positively on the that arrangements East Sussex have in place, and the proactive way that TES, East Sussex County Council and SELEP have worked to ensure a smooth transition. On Devolution, there's nothing that East Sussex see as potentially advantageous currently and therefore will wait to see what tier 2 deals look like.
- 3.10. Cllr John Lamb (Southend-on-Sea City Council), on behalf of Southend would like to extend gratitude to Helen and the Secretariat team but also to all the local officers who are working so hard. Work is underway to support the various SELEP cross-cutting workstreams that have been agreed as well as progressing towards level 2 Devolution as has been outlined previously by Cllr Bentley. Unfortunately LEPs will be coming to an end, but Southend is prepared for taking on the responsibilities and accountabilities that LEP integration brings. Progress is being made very smoothly albeit there are some concerns because there are delays with respect to guidance from government. Despite this however Southend are pleased with the way things are moving forward and in the way that everyone is working together across Greater Essex.
- 3.11. Sarah thanked the Local Authorities for their updates and stated that she felt it was important for the Board to have an understanding as far as possible of the work that is underway at local level. Sarah Dance opened up for any discussions and questions relating to Item 3.
- 3.12. Simon Cook commented that listening to all the feedback and the progress that has been made thus far, a potential risk could be the delay of government guidance. SELEP have done a lot of work to progress what is a fairly orderly transition and he asked whether a view would be taken by the Board to ignore government

guidance going forward if it had a disrupting effect on that progress that has been made so far particularly in the context of the short amount of time remaining until March 2024.

- 3.13. Carol Ford thanked the team for producing the Critical Milestones and Dependencies outlined within Appendix B which is very helpful. Two questions in relation to that: 1) Whether there are 'Plan B's' should any of the critical milestones not be met; and 2) Whether the crucial Resourcing work, including the necessary process of consultation with staff as the transition process goes forward, is underway and noting the risks around ongoing resourcing of the team.
- 3.14. Cllr John Lamb responded to Simon Cook's comments, and stated that government have given the LEP the objective of integrating into Local Authorities, and irrespective of whether everyone agreed with that decision, it is the required goal. Therefore, the Board should focus on getting the job done, and rather than wait for government guidance it should be telling government what the SELEP area wants and the direction of travel. If that is not done there is a risk that progress will stall and that is not what we or our businesses need, what is needed is clarity and a moving forward. Cllr Lamb stated SELEP now have an end game that it is moving towards, let's make it happen and then say to government that if there are changes required they can come back and request that after the goal has been achieved.
- 3.15. Sarah Dance stated that she personally would agree with that statement, as long as SELEP continue to be compliant with the Assurance Framework as far as possible and exercising due diligence as it follows the path towards an orderly transition as set out and agreed at the last Board meeting.
- 3.16. Helen Russell, responding to Simon Cook's question at 3.12 above, noted that there is a large amount of work that can continue to be done outside of that which requires government guidance. The critical input from government that is required however is for DLUHC to release Essex County Council of its Accountable Body status, otherwise Essex County Council will continue to have that ongoing responsibility. Helen stated that she is not getting the impression that it will be an insurmountable hurdle to come to an agreement with government on that point, however the timeliness presents challenges particularly given the deadline which government want us to work to. With respect to further guidance and clarifications, Helen agreed with Sarah and with others that as long as SELEP are compliant with the Assurance Framework and with what is collectively agreed as the plan going forward, work can continue at pace. If guidance is received which contradicts the work underway then SELEP are in a positive position to push back where necessary given that there has been a locally influenced rationale behind various decisions that have been made.
- 3.17. Responding to Carol Ford's question at 3.13 above, Helen Russell assured the Board that the Secretariat are monitoring the risks and dependencies closely, and the work is very much being owned as a team who are supporting each other across the different areas of work. Although it is a small team and it is a difficult time, the Secretariat team are all proud of the work that has been done at the LEP for a number of years and there is the commitment and dedication to see it through to proper transition. Local Authorities also have capacity challenges so it is a risk that will be monitored, and the aim is to make as much progress as possible with an ongoing mitigation of risks, including that of resourcing and capacity.
- 3.18. Gregory Wilkinson (DLUHC) agreed with Helen Russell's point at 3.16 above, and reiterated that the geographies of Accountable Body status is set out in the government guidance on Functional Economic Areas or potential future Combined Authorities. Responding to Cllr Lamb's earlier comments at 3.14, Gregory assured the Board that whilst the guidance isn't always very detailed on all points this does allow a degree of flexibility for arrangements to be put in place which suit local areas, and DLUHC will not have left those open and flexible only to later make them incredibly restrictive and not fit in with transition plan and areas unable to achieve transition in the time permitted. On the Accountable Body point, DLUHC will work with SELEP further to release Essex County Council from their Accountable Body role and transferring that to the agreed geographies as long as that is in line with the guidance. SELEP's transition plans are moving in the right direction, it's in line with the guidance released so far, there will be guidance released to Local Authorities in the future and part of that is in relation to funding that DLUHC appreciate is an important consideration.



- 3.19. Michael Neumann confirmed that the Accountable Body are fully committed to meeting the deadline of the end of March 2024 but just to reiterate Gregory and Helen's point, the key decision is around releasing Essex County Council from their Accountable Body status. Another word of caution is that SELEP and the Accountable Body will have to fully consider any guidance provided by government. We are currently awaiting clarification on some of the guidance issued earlier but the full position will need to be considered once that is known and if we are unable to close down by the 31st of March 2024 we will need to consider SELEP resource to continue to fund us into 2024.
- 3.20. Cllr Christine Bayliss wanted to note from a District point of view that they have been fully involved in the process at East Sussex and the planned future arrangements and would like to thank colleagues at East Sussex County Council. She stressed that it is really important for Districts to be involved in this conversation as they receive direct government funding and play a key role in levelling up partnerships. Cllr Bayliss had a question with respect to the Risks and Dependencies and whether a change of Government had been factored into the Risks and Dependences, she is not sure if the Labour Party has any new policy on LEPs but it's existing policy is supportive and she wondered if there has been any consideration as to how that may play out if there is a General Election early in 2024 and there was a change of Government. Helen Russell confirmed that this has not been cited as a risk in the Integration Plan, it has been discussed albeit not at length, with respect to potential implications and not fully understanding what those implications may be, rather than a key risk. From Helen's understanding, if a General Election were to take place and a different administration were to come in, there is unlikely to be any change in direction. However, it is a fair point and something that the team will give some thought to over the coming weeks as the Integration Plan is finalised.
- 3.21. Sarah wished to pay particular tribute to Helen Russell, having only recently taken over the role of CEO, as well as to the Secretariat staff team who under considerable pressures; not only as a reduced staff team, but also continuing to monitor the significant programmes that SELEP are already running, in addition to working on this Integration Plan. Sarah also expressed her gratitude to the officers at all the Local Authorities and to the Accountable Body without whom none of this would be possible.
- 3.22. **The Board Agreed** the draft SELEP Integration Plan and its development into a final Integration Plan by December 2023.
- 3.23. **The Board noted** the risks and dependencies highlighted in this paper and the Integration Plan.

Item 4: Options for use of GPF Funding

- 4.1. Helen Dyer presented to the Board (54'29" timestamp on video).
- 4.2. Sarah thanked Helen for her work on this and for simplifying a quite complex area. Sarah opened the floor to questions and comments (**verbatim minutes follow, 1h02'43" timestamp on video**):
- 4.3. Cllr Kevin Bentley: Theological one for me is option 2(a) because we just need to get this thing done and I await Keith's comments from East Sussex and Kent's comments as well but for me 2(a) is the one to go because otherwise certainly from an Accountable Body point of view we wouldn't want to keep resourcing this way beyond the life of the LEP. So, for me, it's option 2(a).
- 4.4. Sarah Dance: Thank you Kevin, Cllr Glazier.
- 4.5. Cllr Keith Glazier: We are a bit more relaxed with 2(a) or 2(b), we certainly don't want to go to 2(c) because it does create a problem for Essex as Accountable Body. I think having a bit more time to understand those two options would be helpful and I wonder if that could be arranged between now and the Accountability Board in November to just understand, but if we were forced to a vote, I would go 2(a) or 2(b).
- 4.6. Sarah Dance: Thank you Cllr Glazier. Cllr Lamb.
- 4.7. Cllr John Lamb: Yes thank you Sarah, also for Southend, we would go for 2(a) and I agree with Kevin, we need to get this done and of course when you look at it, it does look at all the Upper Tier Local Authorities for being

involved in this and we certainly are keen to make sure that this actually is disaggregated right the way through to the upper level Authorities. So we would go for 2(a). Thank you.

- 4.8. Sarah Dance: Thank you. Cllr Edwards.
- 4.9. Cllr Lauren Edwards: Thank you. I think similar to others, 2(a) or 2(b) are options that we're comfortable with. I think 2(a). Medway is £175,000 worse off than under option 2(b) but we recognise that operationally it is the more simplistic option and we also recognise that it's also providing us with more certainty so based on that and subject to the discussion I would be comfortable supporting option 2(a).
- 4.10. Sarah Dance: Thank you. Any other comments? David, thank you.
- 4.11. David Sheppard: Thank you Chair. What I wanted was clarification really whether we are deciding today between option 1 and option 2, whether we are looking to then make a decision on the a), b) or c). Because as Cllr Glazier indicated, it's a complex area to differentiate between a) and b) which will give us more time to evaluate exactly which one we are likely to support. So it strikes me, if we are going to vote on 1 or 2 today with a view to look in more detail into the implications of 2(a) and (b) that is a simpler thing, straight forward thing to do today than to then go down and look at which item within option 2 we would then actually choose. So that point of clarification for me is which one of it is those, 1 or 2 or are we going to look into a), b) and c) today?
- 4.12. Sarah Dance: Helen (Russell) or Helen (Dyer) would you want to come in?
- 4.13. Helen Russell: Obviously, if there is only a willingness to make a decision around option 1 or 2 today then that's what we'll have to work with but I think ideally we would take a decision on the a), b) and c) as well. For two reasons, one is purely around timescales and our ability to reach future timely decision making points. Each time we defer it to another Board we lose time and obviously this is one part of everything else that we're trying to achieve over the coming weeks and months so I think ideally for that reason alone we would prefer if possible a vote on the a), b), c) today.
- 4.14. Helen Dyer: We would ideally like an a), b) or c) decision because it just gives us that little bit more time to complete the process to implement the option. Obviously if that's not achievable we can, as long as we've got some steer as to option 1 or 2, we can bring it back to a future meeting but there just needs to be an awareness that that may mean that we're not able to complete the formal processes before the end of March.
- 4.15. Sarah Dance: Thank you, you so the timeline is the challenge. Cllr Glazier, then Vince Lucas, then Cllr Edwards please.
- 4.16. Cllr Keith Glazier: Thank you, just having heard the two pleas from the people who are dealing with it, day in day out, I'm not against 2(a) so if it helps to have a vote and a clear sense of direction I think that we would support that and I can understand totally that every day lost is twice as hard to catch up later on so I just thought that might help.
- 4.17. Sarah Dance: Thank you. Vince.
- 4.18. Vince Lucas: Thank you, just two points from me. One taking an independent view, time is of the essence we've got people in this process who need to know what's happening and it seems a little bit incongruous with not having real clarity, because with DLUHC we want to have the understandability of the Accountable Body that is clearly split and anything that affects that doesn't make our position clear. And the second point is I strongly believe we need to operate with what's the best thing for the receiving Authorities because at this stage they're the ones taking on the risk of this so from there I'd be swayed very much by what the Leaders of the new Accountable Bodies want to do.
- 4.19. Sarah Dance: Thank you Vince. Cllr Edwards and then Liz.
- 4.20. Cllr Lauren Edwards: Thank you. Similar I think to Vince, I just wanted to make people aware that these options have been discussed at quite a lot of length and detail certainly from a Kent and Medway perspective so that

we fully understand the implications of the options, just to give people some assurance that due consideration has been given and certainly given the time constraints my preference would be that we do make a decision today.

4.21. Sarah Dance: Thank you. Liz.

4.22. Liz Gibney: Just to say along with some others that I'm aware that KCC (Kent County Council) are happy with 2(a), that's all.

4.23. Sarah Dance: Thank you very much, and Kevin.

4.24. Cllr Kevin Bentley: If it just helps you Chair, I'm happy to propose 2(a) as the preferred option.

4.25. Sarah Dance: Thank you very much, that's brilliant timing. **(end of verbatim minutes, 1h10'47" timestamp on video).**

4.26. **The Board agreed** to endorse the following option for deployment of the available Growing Places Fund funding:

Option 2 a) Disaggregate the fund to each Upper Tier Local Authority as a total of their existing GPF loan allocations and their proportion of the funding currently held by the Accountable Body (as exemplified in Tables 3 and 4) and accept that total parity has not been achieved.

Item 5: CV19 Recovery Fund Evaluation Highlights (1h11'26" timestamp on video)

5.1. Sarah Dance reminded the Board that SELEP moved very swiftly during Covid to release some funds to enable our businesses to survive during that incredibly challenging time.

5.2. Jo Simmons and Louise Aitken presented to the Board.

5.3. Sarah Dance thanked both and noted that it is very positive to be able to take the time to reflect on some of the work that has been achieved as a LEP and to celebrate and ensure that we are sharing that learning with others as we go forward. Sarah wished to pay tribute to Jo and Louise and all those organisations who worked on these programmes so hard and so fast in a really crucial time. Sarah encouraged Board members to look on the SELEP website if they have not yet done so to be able to view some of the learning that has come from the evaluation.

Item 6: Growth Hub Update (1h25'32" timestamp on video)

6.1. Jo Simmons presented to the Board.

6.2. Sarah Dance thanked Jo and the team at Essex County Council for juggling a difficult situation and ensuring that businesses can get the best advice possible for their future growth.

6.3. **The Board noted** the successful reinstatement of the BEST Growth Hub service and SELEP-wide service delivery for 2023/24.

6.4. **The Board noted** the ongoing risk to service continuity resulting from the annual funding cycle.

Item 7: AOB & Close

7.1. No Other Business.

7.2. Date of next meeting is 8 December in person, location to be confirmed.

7.3. Sarah Dance closed the meeting and reminded the Board of the AGM commencing at 12:00.